

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 03335 071106Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /066 W

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P R 070853Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6798

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3335

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, RP, LY, XF

SUBJECT: MINDANAO NEGOTIATIONS: RECESS IN TRIPOLI

REF: MANILA 3261

1. LATE MARCH 5, ON RETURN FROM BRIEF VISIT TO PALAWAN, PRESIDENT MARCOS ANNOUNCED NEGOTIATIONS IN TRIPOLI HAVE BEEN RECESSED. SECOND ROUND OF TALKS WAS TO HAVE RESUMED MARCH 5. MARCOS HAS SUMMONED HOME GOP'S PRINCIPAL NEGOTIATOR, UNDER-SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BARBERO, WHO WILL REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH SCHEDULED MEET MARCH 8. MARCOS SAID TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE RESUMED "ON A DATE TO BE AGREED UPON LATER ON BY THE TWO PARTIES." ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS (BASED ON MALACANANG BACKGROUNDING), NEGOTIATIONS ARE DEAD-LOCKED BECAUSE OF MNLF'S DEMAND FOR INDEPENT STATE, INCLUDING SEPARATE AMRY AND FLAG. BEGIN FYI-TEXT OF MNLF DRAFT PRESIDENTIAL DECREE ESTABLISHING MUSLIM AUTONOMOUS REGION IS NOW CIRCULATING IN MANILA, ALTHOUGH THERE SOME QUESTION  
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PAGE 02 MANILA 03335 071106Z

WHETHER IT GENUINE MNLF PRODUCT. COPY BEING POUCHED  
EA/PHL. END FYI.

2. DESPITE IMPASSE, PRESIDENT MARCOS EXPRESSED OPTIMISM  
"WE WILL COME TO A PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE MINDANAO PROBLEM." MARCOS, WHO CLAIMED PRESENT QADHAFI ALSO OPTIMISTIC, SAID HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO TALK TO LIBYAN

LEADER WHO WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH FIEDL CASTRO VISIT AND REORGANIZATION OF LIBYAN GOVERNMENT.

3. PREPARATIONS FOR MARCH 17 PLEBISCITE ARE PROCEEDING APACE. GOVERNMENT'S PROPAGANDA EFFORT TO GET OUT THE VOTE IN FULL SWING. COMMISSION OF ELECTIONS (COMELEC) HAS DISTRIBUTED REFERENDUM PRIMERS EXPLAINING REGIONAL AUTONOMY IN EFFORT TO COUNTER MNLF POSITION PAPER. COMELEC COMMISSIONER HAS ALSO FORECFULLY DENIED PLEBISCITE MAY BE CANCELLED.

4. SOUTHERN COMMAND CHIEF ADMIRAL EXPALDON WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH SENIOR MNLF REP MANJOORSA TODAY (MARCH 7) TO DISCUSS EXTENSION OF CEASEFIRE. 043 4REPORTS ESPALDON CONFIRMED REPORTS OF SPORADIC CLASHES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT TROOPS AND ARMED GROUPS IN ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR AND SOUTH COTABATO, ALTHOUGH ARMED GROUPS NOT POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED AS MNLF UNITS. ESPALDON SAID HE WOULD INFORM MANJOORSA OF "QUITE A NUMBER" OF NLF TRUCE VIOLATIONS DURING LAST FEW DAYS.

5. IN FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE IN MARCH 7 TIMES JOURNAL, VIC TANEDO WROTE THAT AMONG OPTIONS GOP CONSIDERING ARE: A) INTERVENTION OF MARCOS AND QADHAFI, B) SECOND MISSION OF MRS. MARCOS AND C) A LONGER COOLING OFF PERIOD TO ENABLE NEGOTIATORS TO ELIMINATE IRRITANTS IN THE TALKS. TANEDO REPORTS THAT MALACANANG SOURCES BELIEVE THAT DESPITE THE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH LED TO RECESS, CHANCES OF A SOLUTION TO MINDANAO QUESTION HAVE NOT BEEN IMPAIRED. SAME LINE AP-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MANILA 03335 071106Z

PEARED IN REPORTS IN EXPRESS AND BULLETIN. MARCH 7 BULLETIN REPORT HEADLINED "PEACE HANGS ON MARCOS TALK WITH QADHAFI."

6. EDITORIAL COMMENT ON RECESS RESTRAINED. MARCH 7 TJ WARNS IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO CONCLUDE THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS HAS BEEN A FAILURE, BUT ADMITS "NEGOTIATIONS ARE IN A STALE-MATE." TJ BLAMES DEADLOCK ON MNLF'S RETURN TO ITS "ORIGNIAL SECESSIONIST DEMAND" FOR AUTONOMOUS MUSLIM STATE INDEPENDENT OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. MARCH 6 EXPRESS EDITORIAL NOTES THAT MNLF HAS REITERATED ITS OLD SECCSIONIST DEMAND. EXPRESS WONDERS WHY MNLF HAS CHANGED ITS POSITION AND CONTENTS MAJORITY OF MUSLIMS LOYAL TO GOVERNMENT. EXPRESS COLUMNIST VALENCIA OPINES MARCH 7 THAT NOTHING CAN HAPPEN IN THE TALKS UNTIL MARCOS AND QADHAFI "IRON OUT THE KINKS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS."

7. COMMENT: DESPITE MARCOS' EFFORT TO PUT BEST FACE ON THINGS, THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SERIOUS SOURING OF NEGOTIATING SITUATION IN TRIPOLI. MARCOS, HOWEVER IS STILL COUNTING STRONGLY ON QADHAFI TO GET MNLF ADOPT MORE TRACTABLE

POSTURE. WHETHER THIS CONFIDENCE JUSTIFIABLE REMAINS TO  
BE SEEN. PRESUMABLY GOP'S DECISION TO PERSIST WITH  
PLEBISCITE WILL FURTHER IRRITATE MNLF, BUT ITS CANCELLATION  
AT THIS STAGE WOULD REPRESENT SERIOUS LOSS OF FACE FOR  
PRESIDENT. BARBERO'S PERSONAL REPORT WILL HELP SHAPE GOP'S  
FUTURE STRATEGY, BUT PROSPECTS FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN  
THE SOUTH SEEM DIMMER THAN THEY HAVE AT ANY TIME SINCE  
EUPHORIC DECEMBER 24 ANNOUNCEMENT OF CEASEFIRE.  
SULLIVAN

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## Message Attributes

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